

PRESS RELEASE

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

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CITY WARNS RESIDENTS OF POTENTIAL FOR FRAUD *Scam Takes Aim at Residents in City Construction Project Areas*

INDIANAPOLIS – Following an incident in a drainage improvement project area, the Indianapolis Department of Public Works (DPW) is warning residents to be on the alert for con artists posing as city construction workers collecting payment from homeowners.

Last week, a man wearing a hardhat and reflective vest approached a homeowner in the Pendleton Pike and Shadeland Avenue Drainage Improvement Project area and claimed the homeowner owed the City of Indianapolis \$1,200 for her portion of the project. This man was not a city employee or contractor.

“The City of Indianapolis will never contact residents and ask them to pay for city construction projects,” said DPW Director David Sherman. “Though this situation is very rare, we encourage residents to be on the lookout for this type of fraud.”

In light of this incident, DPW is reminding residents about ways they may be contacted by the city regarding a construction project.

- DPW may contact residents by mail and ask them to provide feedback about problems in their neighborhoods to help DPW properly plan for future infrastructure improvements.
- DPW may notify residents by mail or a door hanger brochure of activities during the project design process. Activities may include smoke testing, soil boring and other engineering analyses.
- DPW may invite residents by mail to a public information meeting.
- DPW may contact residents about removing encroachments in the right of way, including trees, bushes and fencing.
- DPW may contact residents regarding obtaining property easements for construction projects.
- DPW may contact residents informing them that the construction project is underway or completed.
- DPW will **never** contact residents asking for payment for construction projects.
- Residents in Septic Tank Elimination Program (STEP) project areas are required to pay a one-time sewer connection fee. **See below for additional information.**

(more)

If a resident is contacted by DPW or someone claiming to be a city representative and has questions or concerns, please call DPW at 327-2561 for more information. Residents who believe they have been a victim of this type of fraud should contact the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department at 327-3811.

Sanitary sewer projects are funded through sanitary sewer user fees for which residents connected to the sanitary sewer system are billed monthly by Indianapolis Water. Storm water and drainage improvement projects are funded through storm water user fees, which appear on homeowner property tax bills. Bridge, street and transportation improvement projects are funded through federal, state and local taxes.

About the STEP Connection Fee

The city requires that the sewer connection fee and any other permitting fees and charges be paid before construction permits are issued. Cash, personal checks, and money orders are accepted, as well as Visa and MasterCard with a valid photo ID. Checks and money orders must be made payable to the City of Indianapolis. If the connection fee isn't included in the contractor's bid for connecting the home to the sanitary sewer line, then homeowners may pay the connection fee in one of the following methods:

1. Pay in person.

Make your payment in person at the Office of Code Enforcement (OCE), 1200 Madison Ave., Suite 100, Indianapolis, IN 46225. You must go to OCE either before your contractor goes to obtain permits, or at the time he/she is obtaining permits. If you choose this payment option, you must make arrangements with your contractor when you hire him/her to do the work. Your contractor must have already applied for a permit before you make your payment in person.

2. Give your contractor a check or money order in an envelope.

Enclose your check or money order in a secure envelope and give it to your contractor. He/she will take your payment to OCE when he/she goes to obtain construction permits. Do not send cash in this envelope. Ask for a receipt or proof from your contractor that you used this method to pay the connection fee.

3. Homeowners with an annual household gross income at or below \$45,553 a year may apply for the STEP Financial Assistance Plan.

The city developed the STEP Financial Assistance Plan to help lower-income residents in STEP project areas pay the connection fee over time. The Financial Assistance Plan is an installment plan that allows qualified residents to make monthly payments over a five-year period. For more information on the Financial Assistance Plan or to request an application packet, call 327-8314.

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